

Memoirs of a "COLD WARRIOR"

By IRVING KRISTOL

RUSSELL LYNES, authority on what's highbrow and lowbrow, in and out, recently wrote: "The new chic status symbol of the highbrow is to have been unknowingly on the C.I.A. payroll. . . ." Well, perhaps; but I'm not so sure. I have the feeling that, of late, I've not been really chic at all.

I have been getting that feeling because an awful lot of people—including some old (now former) friends—keep assuring me that the Zeit-

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geist has passed me by. I am a dropout from history, they murmur, and probably beyond the reach of retraining and rehabilitation. For I was a creature of the nineteen-forties and fifties, an anti-Communist liberal, a political organism that is deemed to have suffered permanent damage from overexposure to the subzero climate of the cold war. In contrast, the "new breed" of the nineteen-sixties is genetically wholesome, intellectually incorruptible, and securely possessed of the knowledge that "anti-Communism" has never been anything but an elaborate con game on behalf of the power structure.

About this "new breed" itself, I shall have a few things to say. But first of all, I must recount the inside story of my involvement with the C.I.A. It's not a particularly interesting story, I hasten to warn. On the other hand, that fact in itself is interesting in a way. For it suggests that the ever-increasing appetite for political melodrama, in our time, is easily outstripping the supply. The truth about the cold war, when finally exposed to historical scrutiny, is—in my opinion—not likely to be so very different from the conventional memories which we "cold warriors" carry around in our heads.

I WAS co-founder (with Stephen Spender) of *Encounter* magazine, in London, in 1953, and remained co-editor until 1958. The magazine was sponsored by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, a liberal anti-Communist organization with headquarters in Paris. Had I known what has since been revealed, that both the Congress and *Encounter* were subsidized by the C.I.A., I would not have taken the job. Not, I hasten to add, because I disapproved of the C.I.A. or even of secret subsidies (at certain times, in certain places, under certain conditions, for specific and limited purposes). Aside from the fact that the C.I.A., as a secret agency, seems to be staffed to an extraordinary extent by incorrigible blabbermouths, I have no more reason to despise it than, say, the Post Office. (Both are indispensable, both are exasperatingly inept.) No, I'd have refused to go for two reasons: First, because I was (and am) exceedingly jealous of my reputation as an independent writer and thinker. Second, because, while in the Army during World War II, I had taken a solemn oath to myself that I would never, never again work as a functionary in a large organization, and especially not for the United States Government. It is an oath I have so far kept inviolate—except for those five years when I was unwittingly on the C.I.A. payroll.

But how could I have been so unwitting? Were there no signs of the C.I.A. presence? Were there not, dur-